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Senate Renews Abandoned Newborn Law *Michigan parents give up babies safely and anonymously*

October 9, 2003- The Michigan Senate today passed a measure extending the Abandoned Baby Law allowing parents to leave their newborn babies at hospitals, fire departments or police stations without legal reprisal. State Senator Shirley Johnson (R-Royal Oak), the sponsor of the original legislation, voiced her appreciation to her colleagues.

“The priority here is to save the baby’s life by placing them in a safe and secure environment. While it is extremely unfortunate that we need this law, it does provide an option to extremely sad and unsafe situations,” Johnson said. “Even if Michigan had one abandoned baby because parents were scared of prosecution, that would be one too many.”

Johnson sponsored the original legislation two years ago following alarming reports of the rising number of newborn abandonments throughout Michigan, as well as the United States. Prior to the legislation, it was estimated that 10-12 babies were abandoned in Michigan each year. In several of those incidents, the children did not survive and parents were never located.

The primary statute contained a sunset provision, designating a three year trial period. In that time there have been 18 surrenders. The most recent surrender occurred in Grand Rapids earlier this month.

Under the law, the parents can anonymously surrender their child within a 72 hour timeframe at hospitals or fire and police stations. As long as they follow specific guidelines, parents will not face any criminal abandonment charges.

Young parents can reach trained crisis counselors for more information 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling 1-866-733-7733

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